

For example, since the end of September, the average daily unemployment claims for Florida have risen by 55 percent, translating into approximately 50,000 more Floridians applying for unemployment benefits. That is mind-boggling. That is staggering.

The unemployment rate in Florida is expected to peak at 6.1 percent next summer. The latest State forecast anticipates 120,000 lost jobs by the end of June, with an additional 115,000 jobs lost in the following fiscal year. And that is only in one State, my State of Florida.

So these statistics show that we still need help, a tremendous amount of it. As we speak today, Florida's State Legislature is meeting in the capital city of Tallahassee once again, trying to rewrite the State budget to make up for more than \$1.3 billion in lost revenue, while also trying to fund rising unemployment claims and skyrocketing assistance needs of those, the least fortunate among us.

So while it is entirely possible that we have already seen the worst of our economic drops—I certainly hope that is the case—the ramifications of these losses will be felt by Florida and many other States for many months and possibly for years to come.

There is no time to waste. We must pass a stimulus package as soon as possible. The substance of that package is clearly the very sticking point where we have substantive disagreement among lawmakers, not only in the Senate but at the other end of the hall in the House of Representatives. There is significant disagreement between that body and this body. Yet there are still many areas on which we can agree: increasing unemployment benefits, helping the unemployed maintain their health insurance, helping our States ride out a recession with fewer Federal spending cuts. At the same time, we must provide assistance to our smaller and medium-sized businesses, and to those sectors that have been hardest hit in these difficult times. Those are the things we can agree on, and we ought to come together in the stimulus package and make that happen.

Once again, I applaud the continued efforts of the majority leader and the minority leader, the chairman and ranking member of the Finance Committee, Senators BAUCUS and GRASSLEY, for sitting down again today to try to come up with an agreement. Once they come up with that agreement, then we can pass it. We can pass it before we adjourn. We can get it into law—the President has said he will sign it—and we can start to take care of our weakening economy.

#### MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL CONTRACTION

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, we have another potential economic devastation in the State of Florida. Lo and behold, major league baseball has voted to eliminate two teams.

The media reports suggest that four teams are on the short list of those that might be dissolved. Lo and behold, two of the four are from Florida—the Florida Marlins and the Tampa Bay Devil Rays—and the other two that are on the list of four are the Montreal Expos and the Minnesota Twins. If any of the four teams currently under consideration for elimination are dissolved—any of those four—the impact to Florida would be significant. Doing so, especially without input from the communities and the regions where the teams are based, would be a mistake.

Baseball made promises to communities in my State that were relied upon by individuals who then built businesses and other assets around the teams. Both Miami and Tampa Bay have invested millions of dollars and years of sweat equity in their teams. Hotels, restaurants, concession vendors, and other hospitality companies, already reeling from the September 11 tragedy, stand to take staggering losses if baseball fails to honor its obligations. Yet the league has completely shut them out of the process, keeping everyone in the dark. The owners got together and made these decisions. They didn't reach out to the communities and get their input.

Take, for example, eliminating the Minnesota Twins, which I suspect would have a great deal of interest to our Senators from the State of Minnesota, and the Montreal Expos, that would have considerable interest to the Senators who border that area. Let me tell you, that would be very troubling for Florida as well because both these teams have a significant minor league presence, and they have wonderful spring training facilities in the State of Florida. Their dissolution would have a direct negative impact on Lee County, which is Fort Myers and Palm Beach County, the city of West Palm Beach where the teams train and play. Many individuals and small businesses in these areas depend on the teams for their livelihood and would be irreparably harmed if the teams folded.

Florida's attorney general, my good friend, Bob Butterworth, explained the problem best when he said "the people of Florida are entitled to some straight answers about the future of major league baseball in this State." That is why I strongly support Attorney General Butterworth's decision to send investigative subpoenas to major league baseball. The people of Florida deserve to know what was said behind closed doors. I applaud the attorney general for taking action so we can get to the bottom of this problem and take whatever additional steps are necessary, including legal action to keep baseball in Florida for many years to come.

It is my understanding we are soon going to have a hearing in the Commerce Committee, on which I have the great privilege to sit as a member, on this particular subject. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. We want some answers in that committee hear-

ing. The league has an obligation to live up to its promises to the people of Florida, and I intend to work ceaselessly to ensure they do.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, Senator CRAIG is here seeking recognition on the pending package that is before us. I yield whatever time he might need for that purpose.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

#### ENERGY POLICY

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I thank the ranking member of the Energy Committee, the Senator from Alaska, Mr. MURKOWSKI, for allowing me this time on the floor.

First, I do want to say for all of us, and for the record, a special thanks to Senator FRANK MURKOWSKI for the phenomenal leadership effort he has put into the issue of energy and the development of a national energy policy for our country. He truly has been relentless over the last good number of years, not just starting when the lights went out in California but long before that when he and I and others who serve on that important committee in the Senate began to recognize that if we did not start reinvesting in the energy infrastructure of our country, that our Nation would at some point be in trouble.

We have watched, over the last decade, our ramping up of a dependency on foreign oil sources. We began to see a rapid use of the surplus of electrical energy that was out there a decade ago, as our country, through the decade of the 1990s, continued to grow 3 and 4 and 5 percent. No one was really reinvesting in building new generating capacity on the electrical side.

As many know, starting in the mid-1990s we began to encourage the Clinton administration to come forward with a national energy policy, one that dealt with this broad range of issues. We called it the market basket of energy: the oil side, the hydrocarbon side, the coal side, the electrical-generation side, the new technology side. We began to invest in new technologies, in wind and in solar. We put money into fuel cells.

Clearly, over the last good number of years we have advanced many of those technologies, but they are not yet mainstream. They do not yet fill up the market basket of energy, and we are still dominantly reliant on electricity generated by coal, by nuclear, and by hydro. We are still dominantly dependent on hydrocarbons, gases, and, of course, the crude that comes from around the world. We know it is well over 50 percent. We are sometimes 60-percent dependent on someone somewhere else in the world being willing to put their product into the market for us to buy.

The lights began to go out in California about a year and a half ago. It